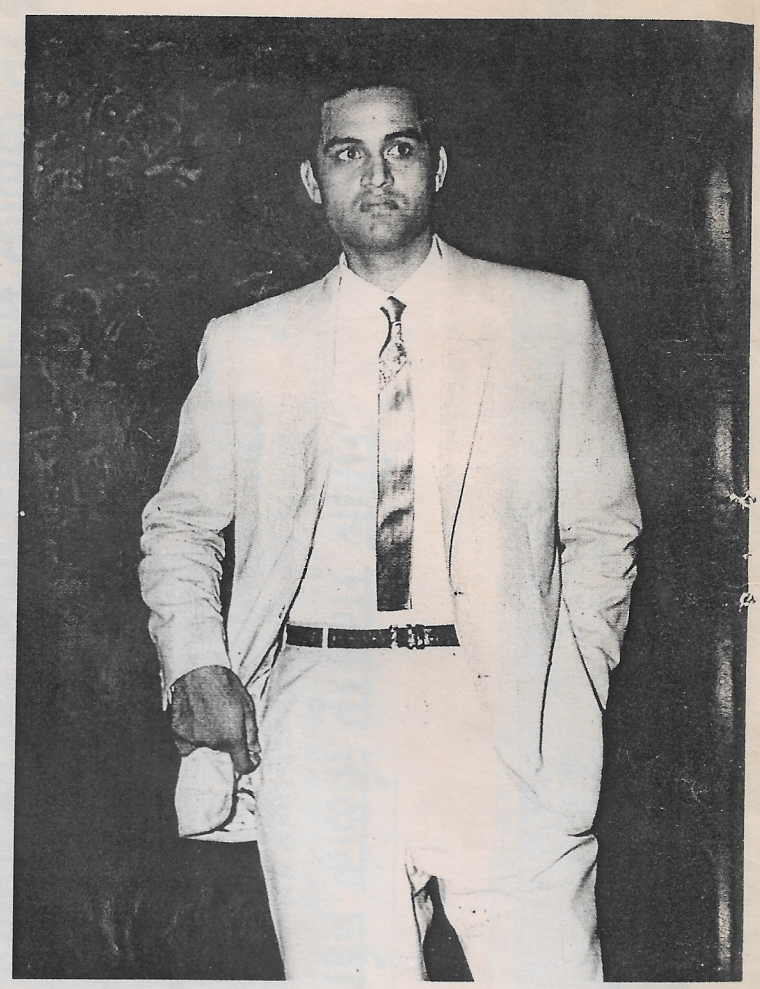
# Vintage

JOY MUKHERJEE



# Meeting Mr. Mukherjee

**Stars are either born or made! But, there are some who are pushed into films. One of them, from the '60s, was Joy Mukherjee, who had a red carpet laid out for him by his father Shashidhar Mukherjee.**

Joy made his debut in his father's home production **Love In Simla**. Joy was still in college, and knew nothing about acting but survived competition from co-newcomers like Shashi Kapoor, Manoj Kumar and Dharmendra, during that period of romantic, musical films; when actors like Shammi Kapoor, Dev Anand and Rajendra Kumar were already stars. Yet, Joy made his presence felt with his tall and handsome personality, (the main requirement for a hero those days). With films by directors like R.K. Nayyar, Raj Khosla, Subodh Mukherjee, Nazir Hussain, Pramod Chakraborty and Sameer Ganguly, Joy went on to give hit films, suiting to a T the character of a romantic hero.

Joy's romantic repertoire includes **Hum Hindustani, Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon, Saaz Aur Awaaz, Aao Pyar Karen, Ziddi, Love In Tokyo, Door Ki Awaaz, Shagird, Dil Aur Mohabbat, Ek Kali Muskayee, Ek Baar Muskra Do** alongwith Saira Banu, Sadhana, Sharmila Tagore, Asha Parekh, Tanuja... He was considered to be lucky for filmmakers as songs picturised on him became hits. Some of his popular songs are... **'Main pyar ka rahi hoon...'** from **Ek Musafir Ek Hasina, 'Banda parvar...'** from **Phir Wohi Dil Laya Hoon, 'Le gayee dil gudiya Japan ki...'** from **Love In Tokyo** and many others. The Raj Khosla directed **Ek Musafir Ek Hasina** was a super hit with a record run of 75 weeks.

*– With Sharmila Tagore*

After his two consecutive successful films **Love In Tokyo** and **Shagird**, Joy Mukherjee went into production with **Humsaya**, set against the backdrop of the Indo-China war, with two heroines — Mala Sinha and Sharmila Tagore. Unfortunately, it did not meet with much success. Joy then continued with his acting till 1972 but in 1975 once again attempted another film — **Love In Bombay**, perhaps inspired by his lucky films starting with the word 'love'. This time he received a bigger setback — the film was never released. Joy never acted in multi-starrers and was leading man throughout his career spanning a little over 13 years.

Joy Mukherjee has almost remained cut off from the film industry for the past twenty-five

years. Today, he lives peacefully with his wife and two sons; far from the glamour world. His son Sujoy (Boy), didn't receive much success as an actor, but is now into TV serials. His other son Banjoy (Toy) is doing his own music albums. His niece's Kajol and Rani Mukherjee are already doing well. 'g' met Joy at his Mumbai residence where he spoke about the past... memories about the tinsel world. Snippets from an interview.

**You've kept yourself away from the industry for almost 25 years. Don't you want to take up character roles?**

After being a 'hero' and earning respect for it I do not find character roles worth the trouble. What respect did Rajesh Khanna and Rishi Kapoor earn after they switched over to character roles? They were never even mentioned in the credits. Their names and photographs were missing from the publicity ads. and stills of their films. It's humiliating. I wouldn't want to be treated in this fashion. It's better that I keep away from character roles. When I was young, actors who performed such roles, like Ashok Kumar, were highly respected and given prominence in the credits.

**That's about acting, but what about film production?**

I've already lost heavily on my last film **Love in Bombay**, which I produced in '75, and have not released till date. I'd certainly want to make a film with both my sons in it.

**Could you relive for us your first film** Love in Simla.

A 1960 film, directed by R.K. Nayyar, it was also my co-star, Sadhana's, first film. I was initially nervous while delivering my dialogues. As it is, I was pushed into films by my father. I was studying in Bombay's St. Xavier's College and was required to report for my shooting at 2.00 p.m. daily, after attending college, and worked upto midnight. It was a hectic schedule but I could withstand the pressure because of my NCC and Airwing training. It helped me remain active all the time. The film was completed within 8 months.

**How did you overcome your weakness of dialogue delivery?**

For one particular shot, I was struggling with my dialogues and there were several retakes when dialogue writer Agha Jani Kashmiri, explained to me how simple my lines were if I uttered them in a natural way. And I did it. I still remember that incident and am grateful to him.

**You were pushed into acting, but what did you really want to be in life?**

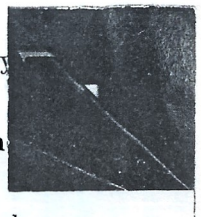
A top class tennis player. I loved tennis very much and used to play it at the suburban gymkhanas.

**Why did you switch over to making your own film, when you were already doing well as a hero?**

During the shooting of **Love In Tokyo**, I used to travel to Japan via Hong Kong and made very good Chinese friends there. But when the Indo-China war broke out and I visited Hong Kong, the same friends turned their backs on me. Hurt, I wondered why decisions taken at the political level should affect friends at the personal one. I decided to make a film on this subject and show that universal love and peace was greater than war & hatred instigated by politicians. The making of **Humsaya** was a dream cum reality for me.

**Don't you regret not having been honoured with any award during your career?**

No, I don't! I never expected one, though I received the Film Critic Award for Best Direction for **Humsaya**. The biggest award is the one from my fans and TV channels today show my films.



**What does life m you today ?**

Today, at 63, I am happy and at peace and realise the real value of life. I get time to think! I spend time with my family. Then, there is this big legacy my father has left in the form of Filmalaya Studios, which I manage along with my four brothers. We are emotionally involved with Filmalaya and would like to preserve it 'cause we're sentimental about it. Making money from it is not the ultimate goal. I'm happy and grateful to god for giving me this life. I remember when K. Asif, the great filmmaker, used to see **Mughal-e-azam** on TV or at the theatre, he'd come alive. Such should be the contribution to life. Real wealth and happiness lie in mental satisfaction and peace and not in one's material possessions. I care for the former.

– *Shagird*

— ULHAS SHIRKE g